# WESTERN CANADIAN PROTOCOL
# COMMON CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR
# ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES AND CULTURE PROGRAMS

## Aboriginal Languages Consultation Report

## April 2001

Prepared for: Manitoba Education, Training and Youth

by Proactive Information Services Inc.

# WCP COMMON CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES AND CULTURE PROGRAMS

*Prepared for: Manitoba Education, Training and Youth*
*Prepared by: Proactive Information Services Inc.*

## A. BACKGROUND

The Western Canadian Protocol Common Curriculum Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Culture Programs - Kindergarten to Grade 12 was released in October 2000. The Framework resulted from collaboration among the four western provinces, Yukon and the Northwest Territories. Manitoba Education, Training and Youth undertook a two staged consultation process to assist in planning for the directions to be taken in developing a provincial curriculum in Aboriginal Languages.

The first stage was undertaken in-house and consisted of mailing two questionnaires designed to address issues related to Aboriginal language instruction. The questionnaires were designed, administered and analysed by Manitoba Education, Training and Youth.

The second stage of the consultation process consisted of a one day consultation session. Participants were invited by Manitoba Education, Training and Youth and represented school divisions/districts and other organizations that develop and implement Aboriginal language programs. This report summarizes the results from this session.

## B. INTRODUCTION

The consultation session took place Wednesday March 21, 2001 and was intended to provide a venue in which participants could share information about their current programming and their future needs. The intent was also to provide participants with the opportunity to give input regarding the need for a provincial curriculum in Aboriginal languages. In addition, the session provided an opportunity for the identification of possible areas of collaboration among the participants. The following discussion summarizes the results of this session.

The day began with an overview concerning the history of the Framework and its development. This was followed by a presentation regarding the role Manitoba Education, Training and Youth has played in the past related to the development of Aboriginal Language curriculum. A representative from Manitoba Education, Training and Youth then reviewed the initial information resulting from the two surveys.

Snap shots of selected programs were then presented by participants which highlighted a variety of different approaches and realities in the development and delivery of Aboriginal Language Programming. Examples of successes included: an eight month community initiated Adult Upgrading language program; a Summer Institute which incorporates traditional values during an intense two week on-site program; the development of a Kindergarten to Grade 2 language program; and, the development of a Cree Bilingual Community School. Another example was a division/district with an Aboriginal Education Policy, an Aboriginal Language Support Teacher and two schools with Aboriginal programming. These presentations concluded the morning activities.

The afternoon activity had the participants in small groups identify:

- What are the priorities in Aboriginal Languages curriculum development? Where do we start?
- Which languages should be developed first? At what grade levels?
- What roles should be played by Divisions/Districts, Manitoba Education Training & Youth and other Associations/Organizations?

## C. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

### 1. Priorities For Manitoba Education, Training and Youth

Participants agreed that the priority in Aboriginal Languages curriculum development should be in the development of a curriculum implementation document. The document should not be language specific, but rather provide a foundation for the teaching and learning of all languages. This document would provide a "common methodology" and would serve as a guide for the development of language curriculum that is determined at the local level. It was also suggested that, as part of document development, a review should occur of existing models used.

A priority is the recruitment, training and certification of Aboriginal teachers and teaching assistants. There is a lack of teachers "who are capable and fluent." However, certification was questioned, as there is a "need to concentrate on fluent people and groom them rather than certifying people that do not have the fluency, history and cultural understanding." Other participants agreed on the need for trained teachers and "Language Development Assistants." It was mentioned that teachers need to not only be fluent, but also "need the theory of language teaching." This was supported by other participants, one of whom stated that a major barrier has been "the lack of Aboriginal Language instructors with linguistic training." It was also mentioned that there is a need for "more accessible training programs, not only for teachers but also for community members." This was seen as necessitating the need for new models of training.

It was also mentioned and agreed upon that there is a need for an "entry level language competency assessment." One example of a process being utilized was one which uses levels of exposure as the basis for assessment. One participant explained how their assessment is based on "seven different levels:" 1=no exposure; 2=limited exposure; 3=familiar; 4=intensive exposure in that parents speak to each other in their language but speak to the child in English; 5=parents speak to the child in their language but don't expect a response in their language; 6=parents speak to their child in their language and receive some response in their language; and, 7= it is spoken at home.

The lack of financial resources was mentioned by many of the participants as being a barrier. There was a perceived need to move the funding of Aboriginal Language teachers "outside the per capita grant" because staff need the "time to develop... they need professional development in order to arrive at cultural competency." The dearth of Learning Resources was seen both as a detriment to success in language programming and as a priority for Manitoba Education, Training and Youth. It was recommended that Manitoba Education, Training and Youth undertake a review of Aboriginal Language Learning Resources.

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth was seen as facilitating this review in collaboration with school divisions/districts and other organizations offering language programming. By providing a "system for networking," Manitoba Education, Training and Youth would provide a setting in which resources could be shared and in which professional development strategies could be more effectively planned and delivered. This would also overcome the barrier faced by many working in this area - that of isolation.

## 2. <u>What Languages Should be Developed First? At What Grade Levels?</u>

Participants believed that languages should be identified and developed at the local level. With this in mind, it was suggested that there is a need for training at the local level relating to the development of curriculum.

While there was also agreement that curriculum needs to be developed across all grade levels, there was a belief that "earlier the better," with some suggesting pre-school. Early Years appeared to be the agreed upon starting point. As noted by one group, "all grade levels should be developed, however different levels should be progressive and advanced - developed in language families."

### 3. What Roles Should Manitoba Education, Training and Youth Play?

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth was seen as playing a role of support, facilitation and coordination. While they were viewed as playing a leadership role in the development of the Implementation Document, they were also seen as facilitating a collaborative process which involved divisions/districts and a variety of other "key" stakeholders. Once the document is developed, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth should play a supportive role to the development which will occur at the local level. School Divisions/Districts, Community members, Elders and linguists were seen as playing a central role in the local development of curriculum.

Post-Secondary institutions were identified as having a central role in the recruitment and training of Aboriginal teachers and Teaching Assistants.

The participant group felt that the opportunity to network and share experiences was important to the ongoing development of Aboriginal Language Curriculum. It was suggested that Manitoba Education, Training and Youth should facilitate networking opportunities.

The following table highlights the results of the participants' small group work.

**Priorities, Responsibilities and Roles**

| Priority | Responsibility | Roles |
|---|---|---|
| **Training** | | |
| Recruitment and Certification of Aboriginal Teachers and Teaching Assistants | ➢ Manitoba Education, Training and Youth<br>➢ Post-Secondary Institutions | ➢ To facilitate recruitment<br>➢ To develop and offer appropriate programs |
| Training personnel in curriculum development at the local level | ➢ Post-Secondary institutions<br>➢ Manitoba Education, Training and Youth | ➢ Provide training expertise<br>➢ Help to develop resources<br>➢ Provide funding<br>➢ Coordinate curriculum guides |
| Review Funding Process for Aboriginal Language Staff and Training | ➢ Manitoba Education, Training and Youth | ➢ Develop ongoing categorical grants |
| Move from Aboriginal Awareness to Cultural Competency | ➢ Manitoba Education, Training and Youth | ➢ Provide leadership in collaboration with school divisions/districts and other key stakeholders |

**Priorities, Responsibilities and Roles**

| Priority | Responsibility | Roles |
|---|---|---|
| Develop a common curriculum Provincial Aboriginal Languages Guide | ➢ Manitoba Education, Training and Youth | ➢ Provide leadership in the development of these documents in collaboration with the appropriate linguistic groups |
| Develop curriculum at the local level | ➢ Manitoba Education, Training and Youth | ➢ Provide funding |
| | ➢ School Division/District, Community, Elders, Linguists | ➢ Identify need and become involved in the development of curriculum in collaboration with others |
| | ➢ Post-Secondary institutions | ➢ Once identified there will be a need for training |
| **Resources** | | |
| Undertake a Review of Aboriginal Language Learning Resources | ➢ Manitoba Education, Training and Youth | ➢ Facilitate with input from divisions/ districts and key stakeholders |
| **Networking/Collaboration** | | |
| Develop Cohesive Networking System | ➢ Manitoba Education, Training and Youth | ➢ To facilitate/coordinate |

## D. IN CONCLUSION

The afternoon provided clear directions to Manitoba Education, Training and Youth. The development of a common implementation document was seen as being a priority. Languages to be developed were seen as being identified by the local community with Manitoba Education, Training and Youth providing a leadership role in facilitating stakeholder involvement, as well as a training role in the development of capacity at local levels. It was also agreed that there is a priority to review and develop Aboriginal Language Learning Resources.